AUGUST 2025

Rock Talk

The Official Newsletter of the Withlacoochee Rockhounds

ATTENTION – PLEASE READ

Unfortunately, a situation has come to the attention of the Board.
Our club has people regularly attending our meetings that have not paid their dues for 2025. These people are no longer members, yet they continue to enjoy the benefits without supporting the club. This is not fair to the members and has put our club in a precarious and dangerous position.
Your Rock club dues are only $35 per year.
Here is where it goes:

- **We must ALL be members of the Weeki Wachee Senior Center to be legally allowed into the building where we meet. Their $25 membership is paid out of your dues to our Rock club.**
- **Out of the $10 left, we pay over $5 to the SFMS* for each member to be covered by their insurance while you attend our meetings or Gem Show.**

Our club actually keeps less than $5 of your dues.
Just a little FYI: Many Rock clubs in Florida charge around $100 in dues.
We have 6 Pixie Machines, which have 6 wheels each.
Each wheel costs around $75 a piece.
Not to mention the other tools and supplies we purchase to maintain this club as an educational and entertaining place for us to enjoy.
Our Club By-Laws state that dues need to be paid by the December meeting for the following year. It also says that guests can attend for only 2 meetings. Then they are expected to join.
We don't want to lose any of you, you are family, but if you have not paid your dues for 2025, please do so NOW if you want to continue being a part of this club.

** Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies*

This Month's Roundup of Stories

- ATTENTION - PLEASE READ
- Peridot
- Secretary's Report
- Clamoring for Classes!
- August 2025 Announcements
- Ammonites
- Yorkshire Fossil Hunters
- Mtorolite
- YouTube Channel & Club T-shirts
- Bench Tips

August's Birthstone - Peridot

Clubhouse Address:
3357 Susan Dr
Spring Hill, FL 34606

Peridot

Peridot, a captivating gemstone that has been cherished for centuries, is often referred to as the "gem of the sun" due to its vibrant green hue.

This exquisite gemstone holds a rich history, fascinating mythology, and possesses a myriad of physical and chemical properties that make it truly unique.

We will delve into the enchanting world of peridot, exploring its origins, mining techniques, various colors and varieties, as well as its value and quality factors.

Peridot's history can be traced back over 3,500 years when it was first discovered on the volcanic island of Zabargad in the Red Sea.

Ancient Egyptians were particularly fond of peridot, believing it to be the gemstone of the sun god Ra. They often referred to peridot as the "evening emerald" due to its captivating green color, which appeared even more vibrant at dusk.

In ancient Rome, peridot became a symbol of wealth and prosperity, adorning the jewelry of noblewomen and high-ranking officials.

Peridot is a magnesium iron silicate gemstone with a vitreous lustre.

It has a Mohs hardness of 6.5-7 and ranges in color from yellow to green.

Peridot crystallizes in the orthorhombic crystal system and has poor cleavage.

Its specific gravity ranges from 3.2 to 4.3, and it is translucent to transparent.

Peridot is composed of magnesium, iron, and silicon and is slow to dissolve in hydrochloric acid.

Peridot is primarily found in volcanic rocks, formed deep within the Earth's mantle. It is commonly sourced from regions such as Egypt, Myanmar, Pakistan, and the United States.

The most renowned source of peridot is the San Carlos Apache Indian Reservation in Arizona, where vast deposits of this mesmerizing gemstone can be found.

Mining peridot is a meticulous process that involves carefully extracting the gemstone from the volcanic rock. Miners must navigate treacherous terrains and use specialized tools to extract peridot crystals without damaging them. Once extracted, the gemstones undergo a thorough cleaning and sorting process before they are ready to be transformed into exquisite jewelry pieces.

While peridot is most commonly associated with its vibrant green color, it can actually occur in a range of hues, from yellowish-green to olive green. The intensity of the color can vary depending on the presence of iron within the crystal structure.

Some peridot gemstones may exhibit a slight golden or brownish hue, adding a unique touch to their overall beauty.

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Secretary's Report

Minutes and More from Club Secretary - Melodye Steverson

Withlacoochee Rockhounds Monthly Meeting - Minutes
Date 7-9-2025

The meeting was called to order by President Michael Steverson at 7:10pm.
We all stood for the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.
There were no new members to recognize.
There were 3 guests in attendance: Butch & Pat Mallett and Elijah Hutton.
Michele Evans made a motion to accept the minutes of our June meeting as printed in the newsletter.
Ralph Barber seconded. Passed by all members.
Treasurer Janet Wheeler gave the Treasurer's report.
James Roush made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report subject to audit. Seconded by Chris Ward.
Approved by all.

President Steverson recognized member Lauren Bell, who wanted to make an announcement; Lauren stated that she is now working at the Sheffield Mine in Franklin, NC, and she will be traveling back and forth from her home in Floral City to Franklin for the time being.

President Steverson announced that we will be having a Faceting presentation by member Lex Kollias for the evening program. Lex had recently taken a Faceting class sponsored by the Withlacoochee Rockhounds Scholarship program.

President Steverson continued by informing the members that he had enrolled the club on “Zeffie”, an online program through which the public can pre-purchase admission tickets for our Annual Gem Show.
And speaking of the Gem Show: This year will be the 50th anniversary of the club's Gem Show. We need all members to be involved with the production of the show: set up, presentation, and take down.
It is a special show and needs to be better than all others before it, which will take all of us working together to achieve.

Each of you needs to decide when you will be available to volunteer, and write that time into your calendars. Remember, being an active, helpful member counts toward your chance to receive the club's Scholarship.

Chris Ward confirmed that he will be in charge of the Education Table at the Gem Show again this year.
Secretary Steverson confirmed that she is ready to teach a Cabochon cutting class, and just needs to have a list of members that are ready to learn the technique. Three people signed up that night and will be contacted to see what day would be best for them to attend.

Several members asked when the Silversmithing classes will return. Secretary Steverson agreed to call Janice Wojcik to see when she was available to return to teaching.

Hunter Mellring made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Diane Hensley seconded, passed by all.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30pm.
Minutes respectfully submitted by Secretary Melodye Steverson.

Immediately following Monthly Meeting 7/9/2025 @ 7:33pm

Secretary Steverson called an emergency Meeting of Board members present.
Attending were: President Michael Steverson, Secretary Melodye Steverson, Treasurer Janet Wheeler, Past President Ralph Barber and Board members Roger Wheeler and James Roush.
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August 2025 Announcements

Clamoring for Classes!

Club members want more classes, and the Board wants to provide them.

- We have a Cabochon cutting class ready to go, but only one member signed up.
- We have a Resin class in the works, but so far, no interest.
- We have the potential for more wire wrapping classes.
- And the Silversmithing class is being re-worked and will be going soon.

All of the classes being offered need to have a minimum of 4 student club members and will need to be paid for in advance.
If you want to take a Cabochon class, text your name, phone number, and day/times you are available to me. 407.760.4472
I will coordinate the class with the students.

Melodye

Jean Casanova has friend whose mother passed away, and is looking to sell the collection of rocks, crystals and more that her mother acquired over the years. Please call Jean to schedule a time to visit her and look through the collection. 352.442.2667
Below are some images of some of the items she has.

Michele Evans has some additional items she is looking to sell.
Below are some of her items. Michele says prices are between $5 to $25.
The amber from Poland will be slightly higher.
See Michele at our next meeting.

Ammonites

Ammonites are extinct marine mollusks that belong to the class Cephalopoda and the subclass Ammonoidea. They were widespread and diverse creatures that lived in the oceans from the Devonian period, around 400 million years ago, until the end of the Cretaceous period, about 66 million years ago when they went extinct along with the dinosaurs. Ammonites were among the most abundant and successful marine organisms of their time.

These fascinating creatures are known for their distinctive coiled shells, which often display intricate patterns and designs. The shells are made of calcium carbonate and were divided into chambers separated by thin walls called septa. The animal inhabited the last and largest chamber of the shell, while the earlier chambers served as buoyancy control and provided protection.

Ammonites came in a variety of sizes, ranging from just a few centimeters to over two meters in diameter. Their shapes also varied greatly, from tightly coiled forms to more open and loosely coiled ones. These variations in shell morphology make ammonite fossils important tools for scientists to study and understand ancient marine ecosystems and geological time.

One of the remarkable features of ammonites is their ability to evolve rapidly, leading to a wide diversity of species throughout their long existence. Paleontologists use the different shapes, sizes, and patterns of their shells to classify and identify various ammonite species. The study of ammonites, known as ammonitology, provides valuable insights into the evolution, paleoecology, and biostratigraphy of ancient marine environments.

Ammonites thrived in a variety of marine habitats, from shallow coastal waters to deep-sea environments. They were active predators, using their tentacles to catch prey such as small fish, crustaceans, and other invertebrates. Their closest living relatives are the cephalopods we know today, including squid, octopuses, and nautiluses

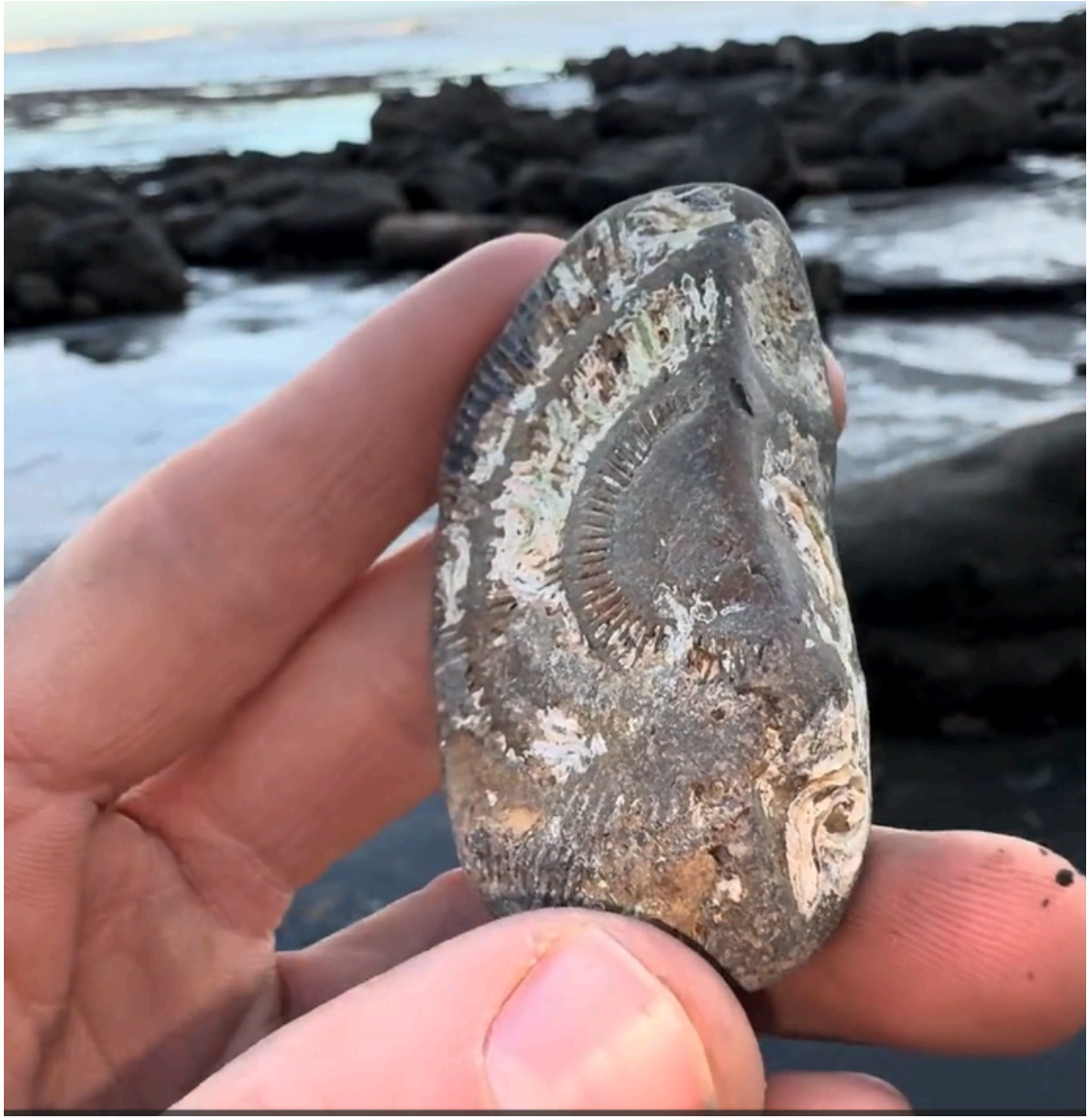
The name “ammonite” originates from the spiral shape of their shells, which resembled the horns of the Egyptian god Amun, often depicted as a ram with twisted horns. The name “ammonite” has since been used to describe this group of extinct cephalopods.

The extinction of ammonites, along with many other marine and terrestrial organisms, occurred during the Cretaceous-Paleogene (K-Pg) mass extinction event. This event was likely caused by a combination of factors, including a large asteroid impact, volcanic activity, and climate change.

Today, ammonite fossils are highly prized by collectors and paleontologists alike. They serve as important indicators of past geological ages and provide valuable clues about ancient ecosystems and evolutionary history. The study of ammonites continues to shed light on the Earth’s deep past and contributes to our understanding of the history of life on our planet.

Read the article at GeologyScience.com

Yorkshire Fossils video



At our August meeting, I'll be playing a video from two fossil hunting brothers from the UK. They're known as Yorkshire Fossils.
This video has them on a rocky beach that is literally an ammonite graveyard. Everywhere they look, there are ammomites!
And, they record their videos in HD, so it should look really nice on the big TV.

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Mtorolite

Mtorolite is a gemstone that belongs to the variety of chalcedony, a type of microcrystalline quartz. It is characterized by its vibrant green color, often displaying patterns and veining reminiscent of jade. Mtorolite is highly valued for its beauty and rarity, making it a sought-after gemstone in the world of jewelry and gemstone collecting.

Origin of the Name: The name "mtorolite" is derived from its primary source, which is the Mtoro Hills in Tanzania, East Africa. These hills are renowned for their deposits of this distinctive green gemstone. The term "mtoro" means "green stone" in the local Swahili language, thus reflecting the gem's characteristic color.

Mtorolite holds significance both culturally and aesthetically.

Culturally, it is associated with the traditions and heritage of Tanzania, particularly the region around the Mtoro Hills. The gemstone may have cultural and spiritual significance for the local communities, possibly being used in traditional rituals or ceremonies.

Aesthetically, Mtorolite is prized for its striking green hue, which ranges from pale to deep emerald green. Its similarity in appearance to jade often makes it a desirable alternative for those seeking gemstones with a similar aesthetic but with a more affordable price tag. Mtorolite is often used in jewelry pieces such as rings, earrings, pendants, and bracelets, adding a touch of elegance and color to various designs.

The distribution of Mtorolite is limited by its specific geological requirements for formation, as well as its rarity compared to other gemstones. As a result, Mtorolite remains a sought-after gemstone in the global market, with most specimens originating from Tanzania's Mtoro Hills. The gemstone's scarcity and unique appearance contribute to its value and desirability among collectors and jewelry enthusiasts worldwide.

Due to its limited availability and unique appearance, Mtorolite holds a special allure for gemstone enthusiasts and collectors alike. Its rarity adds to its value, making it a coveted addition to any gemstone collection.

Additionally, its association with the Mtoro Hills lends it a sense of exclusivity and exoticism, further enhancing its appeal in the world of gemstones.

Read the entire article at *GeologyScience.com*

Our YouTube Channel and Club T-shirts

It has come to my attention that some of you do not know that our club has its own YouTube Channel.
On our channel, I have uploaded videos of past, and recent club presentations.
For those of you who could not make it the meeting when a particular presentation was done, or if you would like to see it again, this is where you can find those videos.
The web address for our Youtube channel is:
https://www.youtube.com/@withlacoocheerockhounds

Want to be the proud owner of some Withlacoochee Rockhounds merchandise? The club has short and long-sleeve shirts for sale. They are available in a wide range of colors and sizes. We also have a Rockhounds tote bag for carrying around those rock specimens you find.
Visit this page on our club's website to see the array of merchandise, and links to our them.
https://www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com/club-t-shirts-.html

continued from page 2

Secretary explained that the Board needed to make a decision regarding the club's 2025 presentation of the William Holland Scholarship, as time to sign up for classes was running out.
After discussion, all Board members present agreed that Hunter Mellring and Diane Hensley should be awarded the scholarships.
President Steverson was notified of the Board's decision and made the announcement to the winners to the applause of everyone at the meeting.

Field Trips

"Note: The Withlacoochee Rockhounds Club does not sponsor field trips other than trips that are sanctioned by the SFMS (The Southeast Federation of Mineralogical Societies).

Our club insurance is through SFMS and does not cover excursions not listed on their website as safe."
The SFMS insurance covers the property owner where members might go, but not the club members.

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Spring Hill, FL 34606

Monthly Meeting Courtesy

Our monthly meetings are a time for members to get together to share their love of rocks, minerals and fossils. It is a chance to learn from each other, teach each other and bond with people that have common interests. It's also a time for the club to conduct a business meeting, during which club Officers and Directors inform club members of changes that have happened or are proposed to happen in the future to club procedure or rules.
It is a time for announcements of coming classes, programs, scholarships, and special events.
It may be a time for discussion on a topic if it is of concern to a majority of members present.
Members may also share experiences and news of interest to other members.
Our monthly meetings should always be a time of sharing, education and entertainment.

We should all show respect and consideration for each other at our meetings, especially for the Facilitator of the meeting, whether it be our President or one of our other Officers. This respect has been lacking in our meetings for several months now. A few attendees have been speaking out without being recognized, shouting, and making inappropriate comments. This not only disrupts our meetings but makes members, new and old, feel uneasy and uncomfortable. It makes our club seem very unprofessional and is disrespectful to the Officers, Directors, and your fellow members.

Going forward, our Board has decided to strive for a more business-like atmosphere while our business meetings are in order. If you are an attending member and have a question or comment, please raise your hand and wait to be recognized by the Facilitator of the meeting. After you are acknowledged and speak, if you later have something else to add, please raise your hand and again be recognized to speak. Please be respectful and polite when you are addressing the Officers and Directors, who volunteer their time, work tirelessly, and make every effort to keep this club alive and prosperous.

We feel this will make for a smoother meeting with all members being heard. No members will be shouted over and no members will feel over run with chaotic outbursts. We will all feel a part of the meeting and will learn more about what our club is doing for and with us.

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Our monthly club meeting is held at the Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Club, 3357 Susan Dr., Spring Hill, FL 34606, on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 7:00 to 9:00 PM

www.withlacoocheerockhounds.com

Your Business Card Size Ad in Rock Talk

The cost for non-club members to advertise their businesses in Rock Talk is $10.00 per month. Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

Advertisers Needed

Please help us find advertisers for the *Rock Talk* and our website. The club can use the monthly income. Both the *Rock Talk* and our website have more exposure than only club members

Contact club treasure Janet Wheeler: ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
or send to: Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Withlacoochee Rockhounds

Purpose

We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to foster interest and promote knowledge of minerals, gems, fossils, lapidary arts, and earrth sciences, through regular meetings, informative programs, and workshops. PLUS, our annual gem, mineral and jewelry show.
Membership is open to anyone sharing such interests.

Dues

Dues are $35.00 annually for adults, and $5.00 for children under 18 years of age.

Club Meeting Location and Time

Weeki Wachee Senior Citizens Center, 3375 Susan Dr in Spring Hill. Meetings are held the second Wednesday of the month at 7:00PM

2025 Club Officers and Appointees

President	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com .com
Vice President	Anthony Maffatone	352.397.7694	anthonymaffatone@gmail.com
Secretary	Melodye Steverson	352.683.9496	melodye@designsbymelodye.com
Treasurer	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Rock Talk Editor	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Club Webmaster	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com
Mailing Reporter	Janet Wheeler	727.938.3644	ceegirl@tampabay.rr.com
Audio/Visual Coordinator	Michael Steverson	407.376.5570	highlander56@gmail.com

Michael Steverson (President) Anthony Maffatone (Vice President) Melodye Steverson (Secretary) Janet Wheeler (Treasurer)
Hunter Mellring Leslie Newberry Roger Wheeler James Roush Ralph Barber (Past President)

Bench Tips from Brad Smith

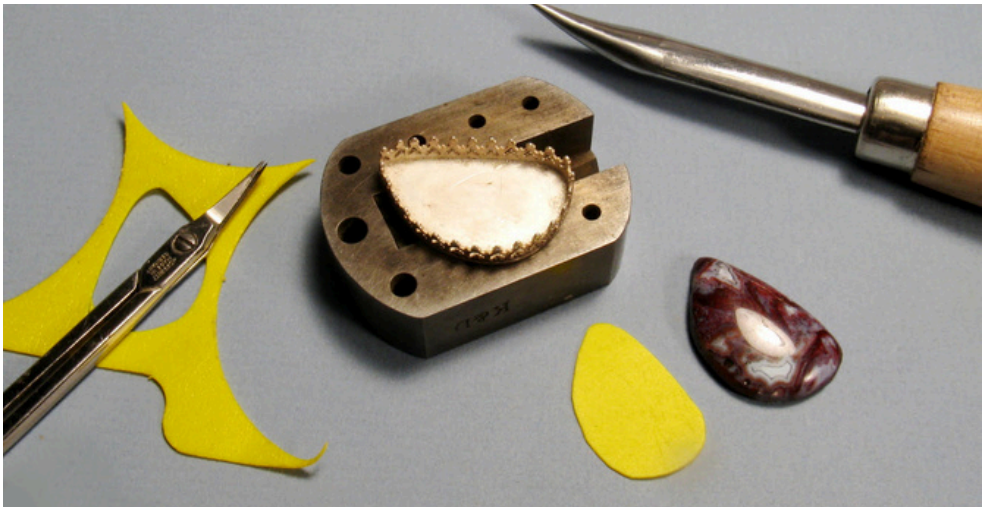
Brad Smith's *Bench Tips* are a monthly feature of Rock Talk

RAISING A CABOCHON

When a cabochon sits too low in a bezel, the bezel hides a lot of the stone.
The solution is to either sand down the bezel height or boost up the stone.
But if you choose to raise it up, the question is what's the best material to use ?

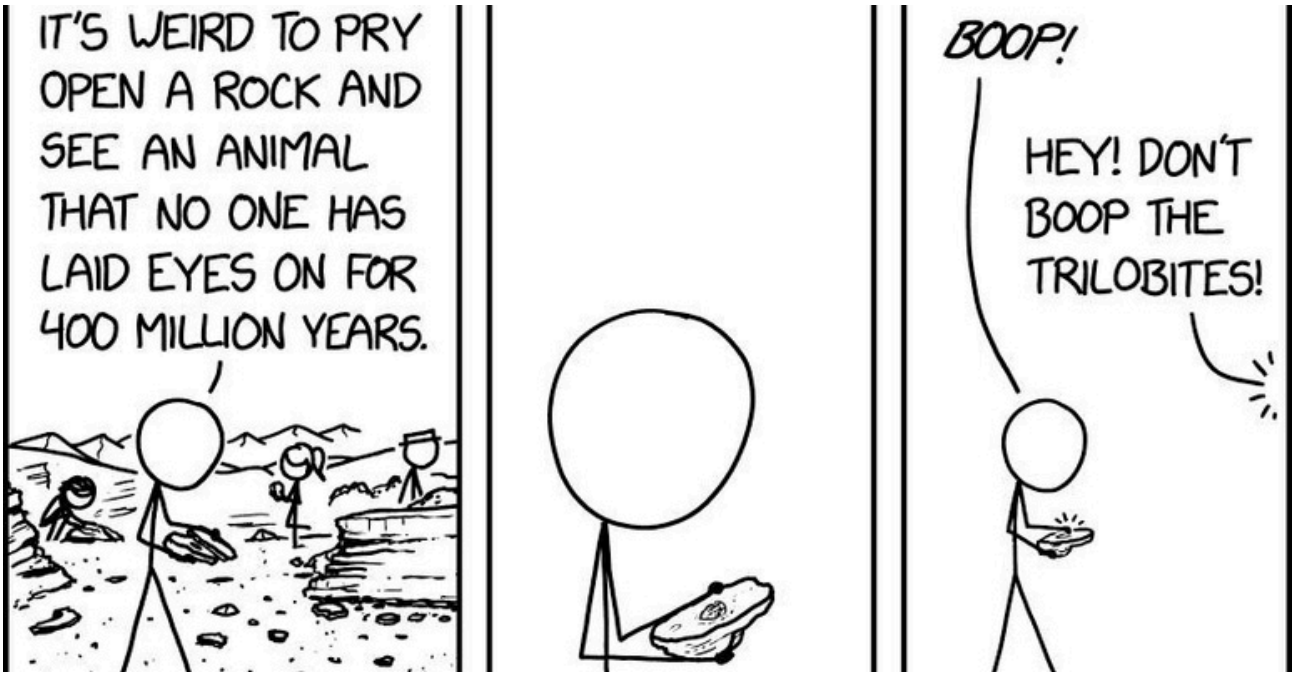
I was taught to use fine sawdust, but now think that might be a problem when used in rings.
I reason that rings will frequently get wet, which would cause the sawdust to swell in size and push the stone against the bezel.
Then, when the sawdust dries out, the stone would be a little loose.

A better approach is to insert a flat sheet to boost up the stone.
It can be a scrap of metal or some plastic from product packaging or old credit cards.
In either case, just cut a piece to loosely fit into the bezel and drop in the stone (with some dental floss) to check its height.

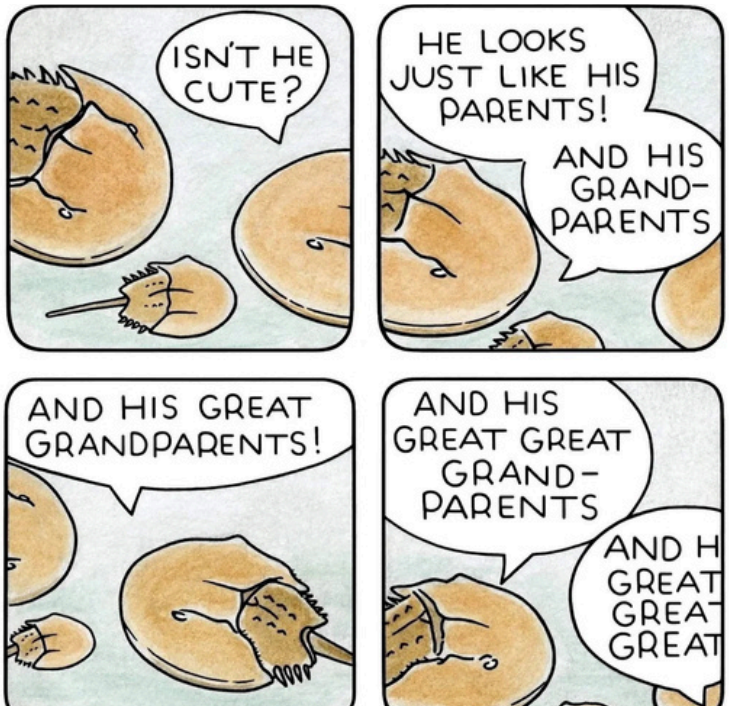


Learn New Skills with Brad's "How To Do It" Books
Amazon.com/author/bradfordsmith

Rock Talk Funny Papers



"I say we take our shovels, cover this back up, and never—and I mean never—speak of it again."



From The Editor

Hello to all Withlacoochee Rockhounds

It is I, your friendly neighborhood editor again.

For our July meeting, Lex Kollias gave us a presentation on faceting. I set up a camera over his faceting machine so everyone could see, on the big TV, what he was doing.

For our August meeting, I will be showing a video from a pair of brothers from the UK who go hunting for ammonite fossils on the Yorkshire coast. The area they are exploring is literally an ammonite graveyard. They use some very nice drone footage, in addition to HD camera footage. I'm sure you'll like it.

If you would like to place a business card ad in the newsletter, please feel free to contact me, and we'll get you added to the next available issue.

Additionally, if any of you have not received your newsletter or are not receiving my e-mail blasts (meetings, rock sales, etc.), *please* check your spam folder. If you are still not receiving them, please contact me, and let's make sure I have your correct e-mail address, and that you are indeed subscribed.

Our Board would like our members to come up with suggestions for programs to be presented at our monthly meetings. What would you like to see? What would you like to learn? What would you like to know? Is there something you'd like to teach or present? You can help our club expand its educational repertoire. We'd love to hear from you all.

Contact any Board member or bring your written suggestions to a meeting.

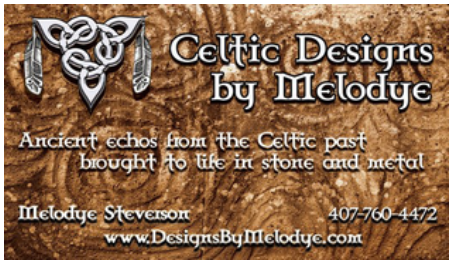
Rock On!!!

Club Phone Number - 352.587.2714

Warning to Withlacoochee Rockhound Members

During the last several months, illicit requests have been sent to members of various clubs in the US, including the Withlacoochee Rockhounds, asking members to purchase gift cards that would be used as donations to various organizations.
These are SCAMS.
Be advised that our club has never and will never ask members to buy gift cards or provide any form of monitary funds to anyone or any organization by phone call, email, or any other method of communication.

Rockhounds Advertisers



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Contact Michael Steverson to set up an ad in both the newsletter and the club website. It will benefit both your business and our club.

If your ad has a web address, or Etsy shop address, I have linked to it.

Advertisers Are Needed
Please help us find advertisers for the Rock Talk and our website.
The monthly income from these ads is beneficial to the club.
Both the Rock Talk and our website have more exposure than only club members.
Contact club treasurer Janet Wheeler: ceecgirl@tampabay.rr.com or send to:
Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634 Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634

Membership Form - 2025

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
Hernando County FL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Full Name _____

Partner's Full Name _____
* If both applying for membership

Child's Full Name _____
* If under 18, and applying with parent

Street Address _____

City _____

State / ZIP _____

Phone Number _____

Email _____

Annual Membership Dues:

*Choose your type of membership

- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Individual Membership $35.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea
- ☐ Under 18 Membership $5.00/ea

- ☐ Returning Member?
- ☐ New Member?

If you are applying, for example, as husband, wife and child (under 18), then fill in full name, partner's name and child's name above. Then, choose two individual memberships to the left, along with an under 18 membership.

Give this completed form, along with your check (made payable to "Withlacoochee Rockhounds") or credit card for dues to Club Secretary Janet Wheeler at a club meeting. Or, you may mail the form to:

Withlacoochee Rockhounds
PO Box 5634
Spring Hill, FL 34611-5634